



Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers: Concert Music from 1960-2000. Edited by Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft. Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers, vol. 3. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 258 pp. ISBN 9780190236892.

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The first publication in a planned four-volume series, edited by Laurel Parsons and Brenda Ravenscroft, *Analytical Essays on Music by Women Composers, Concert Music from 1960-2000*, examines the works of eight contemporary women composers through wide-ranging analytical approaches. The introduction provides statistical information on the extreme underrepresentation of works by women composers

in music theory journals, and at Society for Music Theory conferences, articulating the need for this type of study. The book is organised into three sections: (1) “order, freedom, and design,” (2) “gesture, identity, and culture,” and (3) “music, words, and voices” (pp. v-vi). Each analysis is preceded by a short biography of the composer and a companion website provides useful recordings and scores.

The first part begins with Joseph N. Straus’s analysis of the third movement of German-American composer Ursula Mamlok’s piano trio *Panta Rhei* (1981). Straus focuses on three main melodic lines, which move between instruments, and two pitch-class sets: sc(014), which connect through common tones, and sc(037) or triads, for which he expands Richard Cohn’s neo-Riemannian hexatonic systems. Durations, which are partially serialised, also play a role in two of the ostinato lines. Straus contextualises Mamlok’s serial compositional style through the “Myth of Serial Orthodoxy” (and other myths) to explain “glitches” or deviations from strict serialism in her music. Christoph Neidhöfer’s analysis of Canadian composer Norma Beecroft’s one-movement flute concerto *Improvvisazioni Concertanti No. 1* (1961) focuses on written-out improvisation. Neidhöfer begins with a description of selected excerpts to show how the soloist reacts or responds to the orchestra to project a sense of improvisation. Neidhöfer highlights



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Beecroft's use of the series, invariants within the series, and refers to notes in Beecroft's sketches for interval-tension profiles; he uses the latter to situate Beecroft's work within the European avant-garde around 1960. Neidhöfer concludes by offering different approaches that may be used to interpret a musical plot in the work. In the last chapter of the first part of the book, Jonathan W. Bernard analyses American composer Joan Tower's orchestral work *Silver Ladders* (1986) through the alternation of half steps and whole steps, but primarily focuses on how Tower manipulates the octatonic scale in innovative ways, which he classifies as six different categories. The composer includes one or more of the octatonic collections at one time and moves to different octatonic and non-octatonic collections, which is primarily done through interval content, rather than scale patterns. Bernard contextualises his analysis through Tower's own words on composition.

The second part of the book begins with Judy Lochhead's analysis of Tatar-Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina's *String Quartet No. 2* (1987). Lochhead draws on Gilles Deleuze's theory of difference and repetition to highlight transformations of timbre, dynamics, articulations, register, and pitch in the work. Lochhead articulates the overall form of the three-part work as: "reaching out and tethering," "reaching up and renewing," and "affirmation" (p. 107). Drawing from Gubaidulina's programme note, Lochhead argues that the composer "musically thinks" as repetition and contrast, rather than binary oppositions, in the creation of her work (p. 124). In chapter 6, Nancy Yunhwa Rao analyses Chinese-American composer Chen Yi's *Symphony No. 2* (1993). Rao draws from Chinese opera gestures, primarily *luogo dianzi*, as signifiers to evoke characters, as well as the essence and inner state of these characters, through rhythmic patterns, melodic fragments, and contrasting timbres. Yi blends Western and Eastern elements, which encapsulate well "the transnational cultural context" of the musical gestures she incorporates in her work (p. 130). By focusing on two gestures (epiphany and agony), Rao contextualises the work in the grief that the composer experienced after the passing of her father.

The final part of the book begins with John Roeder's analysis of Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho's "The claw of the magnolia ... ," from *From the Grammar of Dreams* (1988) for two female singers. Drawing on Christopher Hasty's projections, Roeder analyses the metrical and tonal organisation in the third of five songs through imitation, texture, and pitch groupings. With polyvocality, he focuses on the two voices with the same text by Sylvia Plath, unfolding as "dual points of reference" through two simultaneous tonalities and multiple meters (p. 166). He concludes by contextualising his analysis as "double-voicedness" in Saariaho's life (p. 172). In chapter 8, Brenda Ravenscroft analyses American composer Libby Larsen's song cycle *Chanting to Paradise* (1997) for soprano and piano. Highlighting the importance of Emily Dickinson's text for the composer, Ravenscroft examines two—"Bind Me" and "In This Short Life"—of the four settings through the metrical structure of the text and music, pitch classes, intervals and

interval classes, register, dynamics, texture, and contour to highlight oppositions. Ravenscroft concludes with the composer's analogy of the mirror to reflect on Larsen and Dickinson's artistic expression in contemporary society and on recurring themes of "power, control, confinement, and escape" (p. 192). In the last chapter of the book, Laurel Parsons examines British composer Elisabeth Lutyens's three-movement serial work *In Essence of Our Happinesses* for tenor, chorus, and orchestra (1968). Parsons analyses the second movement, whose text was written by John Donne, through pitch-class structures extracted from row forms, orchestration, and the repetition of motives, but primarily focuses on rhythmic irregularities drawing on John Roeder's pulse streams. Parsons interprets her analysis in the context of Lutyens's life and compositional interest in the "temporal experience" (p. 198).

This book is long overdue. The diversity of analytical approaches and musical works make it a valuable tool for research and teaching. This renders the book less accessible to a general audience since most approaches require some discipline-specific background. It seems unlikely that conductors and performers would be influenced to programme or make performance decisions through exposure to these analyses—the third goal of the book collection (p. 5 and 9). This, however, is not necessarily a weakness, given that the main audience consists primarily of researchers. Ultimately, this book is about offering tools to analyse great works, which happen to be written by women composers, and highlights the need to study more of these fascinating works. I highly recommend it.